

Delray Beach

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Community News

TAKING ROOT

As president of local genealogy chapter, Delray Beach man helps others trace their family history.

BY SALLY J. LING
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Family legend had it that Delray Beach resident Richard "Dick" F. Robinson was related to the Indian princess Pocahontas.

He had tucked the curious bit of information in his memory until six years ago, when his sister-in-law started talking about the family tree. That's when he decided to find out if the legend was true.

"That got me started. Now I'm addicted," Robinson said.

Three years ago Robinson, 63, owner of Legacy Scribe in Delray Beach, became certified as a professional genealogical records specialist, and he became president of Professional Genealogists of Florida this year.

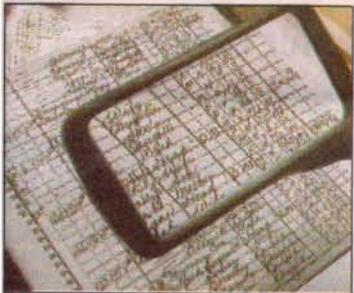
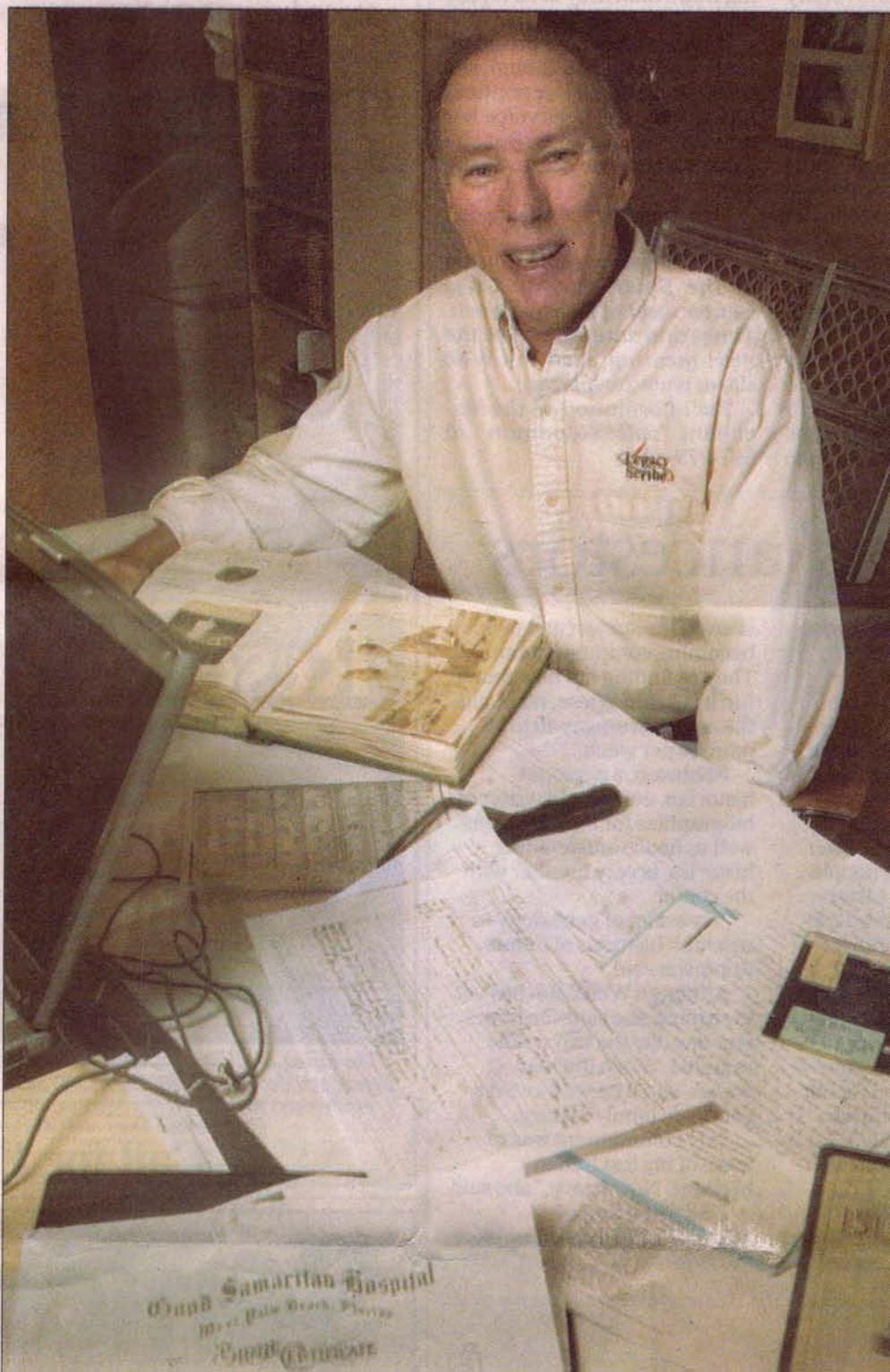
Denise Wells, 53, who lives west of

Boca Raton, is the vice president.

Dedicated to helping people find information about their family history, the new chapter is an affiliate of the Association of Professional Genealogists. The association, founded in 1979, is an international professional organization of genealogists and related family history professionals with 1,500 members worldwide.

"When I first started my search, I didn't know any names beyond my paternal grandfather. I only had one brother and he knew less than I did. There were hardly any family records because they were thrown out when my father died," Robinson said.

With a little persistence, Robinson discovered that although he was not directly related to Pocahontas, he was related to the Massachusetts Randolphins, a fact that led him

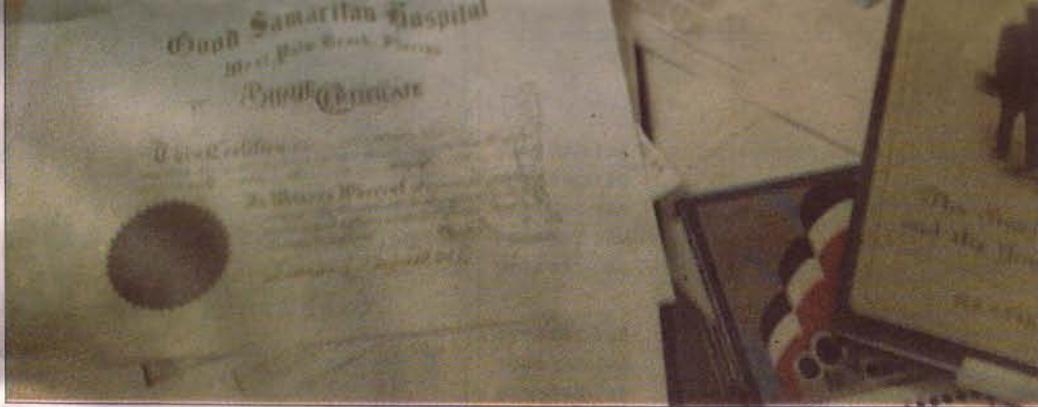


ON THE RECORD: Robinson works on a genealogical project from his home.

With a little persistence, Robinson discovered that although he was not directly related to Pocahontas, he was related to the Massachusetts Randolphs, a fact that led him to believe there was some truth to the family legend. The family was traced to the early pilgrims.

But it wasn't that truth that astonished him, it was the journey. He loved digging into old records and documents.

"The public is very interested in finding out about their family background," said Wells, who has been researching for family and clients for 18 years. To back up her claim, she cited statistics from *Family History Made Easy: A Step-By-Step Guide to Discovering Your Heritage* by Loretto Dennis Szucs that indicated 72 million Americans were



ON THE CASE: Richard Robinson, owner of Legacy Scribe in Delray Beach, became certified as a professional genealogical records specialist three years ago. Robinson, 63, became president of Professional Genealogists of Florida this year. Staff photos/Nicholas R. Von Staden

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Group traces clients' ancestors

■ GENEALOGY

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somewhat interested in their family history.

The Florida Chapter of Professional Genealogists grew out of a conversation Robinson had more than two years ago with Wells, the catalyst for the group.

"We needed a vehicle where professionals could exchange ideas and get job leads. We also wanted to advance our professional standing and provide a support group to professionals," Wells said.

"A lot of people who try to search for themselves get the wrong ancestors into their family. They may not know enough about how to go about finding records or doing research on the Internet," Robinson said. "To get your family history going back two or three generations takes a lot of time."

Mona Freedman Morris of Boca Raton is a member of the genealogist association and specializes in Eastern European and Jewish genealogy. She is a lecturer and author of a self-published book, *Scattered Seeds, A Guide to Jewish Genealogy*, a how-to book.

"People can spend a fortune on CDs and databases to find information that a professional genealogist can find in a fraction of the time. We know how to conduct a search and use private databases that the general public doesn't know about," she said.

The new chapter plans to conduct workshops and lectures on how to find ancestors with search tips, how

to do research on the Internet and how to use the family history centers.

One of those centers, the Family History Center of the Latter-day Saints Boca Raton, is at 1530 W. Camino Real Road.

Apryl Wiese is a volunteer who has worked at the center for four years helping people research their family history. With access to more than 2.5 million reels of microfilm of international genealogical records for people of every faith, its Salt Lake City center helps patrons obtain those reels for their research. Rental rates are \$3.55 per reel for 30 days. The Mormon Church says researching family histories is a cornerstone of their faith.

"There is tremendous interest in this area fueled by the rapid growth of Internet

sites on the subject and people becoming computer literate. They're finding out how much fun it is," said Wiese, who said the center averages 40 to 50 patrons per week.

Robinson, a personal historian, author and writer of biographies for individuals as well as house and building histories, is very familiar with the center.

"I use a lot of genealogy to research histories of homes," Robinson said.

Although Wells' son has yet to surface, she said she hopes that one day the two will be reunited. When that day comes, she'll be ready with a complete family history.

"My commitment was to learn of my lost Italian heritage. Now I have," she said.

Call Robinson at 561-272-2250, or visit apgfloida.org.

Correction

An article on Page 1 of the Community News section on Jan. 2 about the Florida Chapter of the Association of Professional Genealogists contained the wrong title of the group.

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